

A LETTER TO THE AUTHOR
OF THE
TRACT FOR THE TIMES,
No. 90.

ONE who owes much to the "Tracts for the Times," hopes that he will not be held presumptuous, in asking the following questions of the author of the Tract No. 90.

That author, in examining (page 21) the Article on General Councils, writes thus : "General councils then may err, *unless* in any case it is promised, as a matter of express supernatural privilege, that they shall not err : a case which lies beyond the scope of this Article, or at any rate beyond its determination." Now since he confessedly holds himself bound by the words of the Article, and not by the meaning of its framers, does he really mean to assert that the argument there used is not this : "All assemblies of men, who are not all governed by the Spirit and Word of God, may err ; all general councils are such assemblies, and so may err ?" I do not at all consider the truth or

falsehood of this proposition ; but I do say, that his argument, “ assemblies of men who are all led by the Spirit of God cannot err ; some general (Catholic) councils are such assemblies, and so cannot err,” is the contradictory of the former ; so that he denies his subscription even verbally.

Secondly ; Can he mention any general council, Catholic or not, which was not called together in the name of Christ ? If he cannot, must not the Article refer to such as are called together in that name ?

Thirdly ; I ask, and with hesitation, Does Christ’s promise to two or three gathered together in his name, imply catholicity, or refer to councils at all ? Is it not an encouragement to those scattered members who, far from calling councils, were to be left like sheep among wolves, and needed *some* such promise ?

(Page 23.) Speaking of the twenty-second Article, he says, “ *Of course* the Article never meant to make light of *every* doctrine concerning pardons ; but a certain doctrine, the Romish doctrine.” We must consider this question also verbally. The history of pardons seems this : the Canons of the early Church imposed works of penance for sins, but the Church exercised the right of remitting those penances at pleasure.

Now this is precisely the kind of indulgence which the Popes at first granted to the Crusaders ; and though they afterwards discovered that they could grant remission of all sins, yet in claiming the greater, they by no means gave up the less, and therefore the Romish doctrine includes the primitive, which is condemned along with it. Of course the reformers did not

intend this ; but we have to do with their words, not their meaning.

Does not the passage (page 26) from the Homily on Prayer quote Augustine, to prove the non-existence of a third state after death, and thus shew that the Article denies, not this or that kind of purgatory, but purgatory *in toto*?

He says (page 31) that the Romish doctrine about indulgences is condemned in the Article. Is he prepared to shew that the Romish doctrine about indulgences is, “that large and reckless indulgences from the penalties of sin may be obtained by money payments?” Take out “large and reckless,” insert “from the Church” instead of “by money payments,” and you have the Romish doctrine which is condemned.

(Page 35.) Here again the superstitions which he adduces in the matter of images are instances, not of Romish doctrine, but of Romish practices. The Romish doctrine was and is, that *dulia* is to be paid to the saints through their images ; and this doctrine is condemned. As to saying that “the Council of Trent, urged by the truth, &c. is obliged to confess ;” I need not remind the author of the Tract, that Rome had confessed and rejected the more gross parts of her idolatry *before* the Article appeared, so that it cannot be aimed at those parts. She had rejected them in word, but, as usual, had kept to them in deed.

(Page 36.) Invocation of Saints. “By invocation, is not meant the mere circumstance of addressing beings out of sight.” That may be, but the word signifies it. No doubt the framers

of the Article meant such forms of invocation as “Ora pro nobis, adjuva nos S. Petre.” But they do not tell us so; and we must take the word in its full sense, as indefinite and as definite; and in both cases it is “a fond thing.” For by what method does the writer shew that to use words, if we mean nothing definite (i. e. nothing at all) by them, is not a “fond,” a vain, weak, foolish thing? Such invocation, “when addressed to beings who we know cannot hear,” may not be wrong; but it is fond and idle, and must be but a comfortless addition to a prayer. The Homily on Prayer, quoted p. 39, 40, makes no distinction between definite and indefinite; but says generally, “Invocation is proper (*propria*, peculiar) unto God, to be addressed to him alone;” negatively, therefore, “invocation is due to none but God.”

(Page 40, 41.) The quotation from Bishop Andrews seeks to bring in the lesser error by exposing the greater. The question is not, whether Rome does wrong in addressing the saints absolutely, but whether she does right in addressing them relatively: and can the author of the Tract produce a catena of Anglo-Catholic quotations, proving that “prier pour prier” has ever been held lawful by the Church in the case of departed saints?

There is another question I would ask, (p. 36.) What is the Catholic interpretation of the seven spirits which are before the Throne?

(Page 46.) He says (speaking of the Sacraments) “We do not strictly define the number.” Is this correct? Is not the order of the

two first questions on the Sacraments reversed in the Catechism? Does not the argument run thus?—"Quid est Sacramentum?" *Resp.* An outward and visible sign, &c. ordained by Christ himself;" where evidently the words "ordained by Christ himself," are an essential part of the definition. Then comes "Quot sunt?" *Resp.* Two only:" thus excluding all others.

And indeed the Homily quoted, after allowing that some of the Fathers had used the word in a looser sense, does not itself so, but leans the other way. Now if the Catechism defines what the Sacraments are, and their number; and the Homily, after pointing out two which are Sacraments, says that there are other rites and ordinances to which the term has been applied, but to which it does not apply them, and which differ from the two first in kind; what is the obvious conclusion? This discussion about the word Sacrament has been called merely verbal: but it must be remembered, that identity of name leads to the idea of identity of nature; and also, that the Article is levelled at this doctrine of Rome, "vii. Sacramenta a Deo *per Christum* instituta esse."

(Page 51.) "Our Article does not confine itself to any abstract theory, nor aim at any definition of the word substance; nor in rejecting it, rejects a word; nor in denying '*mutatio panis et vini*,' is denying every kind of change." Now it seems strange that any man, taking the Article in its literal and grammatical sense, can say this, when the propositions—"Transubstantiation cannot be proved by Holy Writ," and "the change of the substance of the bread and wine cannot be proved"—are universal

propositions, including every kind of change, and denying that the elements are altered at all.

The argument p. 51—58 does not touch on the paragraph of the Article. In the Article, any change in the elements is denied; in the argument, the possibility of Christ's "super-local" presence is maintained. Now if by "super-local," a presence exempt from and having nothing to do with matter, a spiritual presence to the faithful be meant—we allow it; but if, by "real super-local presence," is meant the presence of that *σῶμα πνευματικόν* (i. e. body informed by, not made of spirit, as one might infer from paragraph 2, page 55, in opposition to *σῶμα ψυχικόν*, or body informed by the animal soul), which, with flesh and bones and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, is now at the right hand of God, we utterly deny it: for though that body seems to have certain supernatural means of loco-motion, yet we find from Scripture, that its presence was always ascertained by its visibility; and we are justified in believing, that were it super-locally present in the Eucharist, it would be visible. Indeed, in this point of view, the Romish miracles given p. 49, 50 do not seem so unreasonable: they venture to carry the principle out.

(Page 60.) My author says, "That the blasphemous fable is, the teaching that masses are sacrifices for sin, distinct from the sacrifice of Christ's death, is plain from the first sentence of the Article." Yet if the Church of Rome taught no such doctrine authoritatively, it is clear that the Article is not aimed at it. Now let me ask, Is not, and has not the Romish doctrine

been, that the sacrifice of Christ's death is repeated by the priest in the Mass? The Tridentine Council (Cat. pars ii. lxxxiii.) declares, "Neque duæ sunt hostiæ, sed una tantum, cujus sacrificium postquam Dominus ita præcepit: 'Hoc facite in commemorationem meam,' in Eucharistia quotidie instauratur;" and can the writer shew that the Church of Rome has ever held that there are sacrifices for sin distinct from the sacrifice of Christ's death?

(Page 63.) "It is conceived that the Article before us neither speaks against the Mass itself, nor against its being an offering for the quick and the dead for the remission of sin." Yet it says, "The sacrifice of Christ's death *once* made was sufficient." Now if the Mass be a sacrifice for the remission of sin, not *per se*, but only as being a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ, then by repetition it contradicts the *once* of the Article; if it be a sacrifice *per se*, and distinct from that of Christ, it is on all hands allowed to be blasphemous. Finally, since he allows, to a certain degree (p. 80), the authority of the "Ratification," can he shew that his interpretation of the thirty-eighth Article is not new? If he cannot, he has offended.

In reply to the last paragraph of that comment (p. 79) may we not argue thus? It is true that we are to obey the powers that be, as ordained of God; but always saving God's commandments and authority; and if man's commands contradict God's revealed word, then "ought" does come in; we ought not to obey them. Now the supremacy of the Pope, by curtailing the plenary authority given (John xx. 23.) to the other Apostles,

does contradict God's word, and it must therefore have been always wrong to allow it. I could not help writing this to point out what I deem errors in No. 90. Should still the writer of that Tract prove to be right, I shall be glad for myself that I have lived to see the true faith restored ; sorry for my Church, which has erred for three hundred years.

